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*Michael K. Smith, Secretary*

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** All State Employees at the Bennington State Office Building  
**FROM:** Michael K. Smith, Secretary of Administration  
**DATE:** January 25, 2007  
**RE:** Relocation Issues

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To begin, let me assure you that all of us in Montpelier – including the Governor, myself, and the General Assembly – are very concerned about the situation with the State Office Building in Bennington, and we are fully aware that many of you have concerns about the pace at which events are progressing. These concerns are entirely justified.

The Governor has asked that I spend several days next week in Bennington, to assess the situation for myself and report back to him on the status of our plans to move all employees out of the building and into temporary accommodations. I am hoping to set up a meeting with all of you as part of this assessment. Like many of you, the Governor is increasingly frustrated with the timeline for moving employees into modular units onsite. He has made it very clear to me that this is a priority for him and he has asked me to investigate the situation first-hand to determine if adjustments to the plan are in order.

So far, the current plan remains the same: move all employees to the modular units as soon as possible and continue diagnostic testing of the existing building. The future plan is to renovate the existing building to improve air quality. However, the future plan depends on the results of the diagnostic testing, and we will map out the future in collaboration with the employees and the community of Bennington. While we do not know the cause of sarcoidosis, and cannot say for sure whether or not it is, in fact, this particular building that is to blame for the relatively high prevalence of that disease amongst the building's occupants, the Governor feels strongly that we need to err on the side of caution.

Recent press stories have correctly reported that there have been some issues with the modular units that required the replacement of some drywall and insulation. Such complications are frustrating. However, no state employee will be relocated to a modular unit before inspections clear those units for occupancy.

There have also been recent press stories alleging that the state should have pursued alternative relocation plans. During my investigation, I will discuss these alternatives with the appropriate individuals. However, the current plan seems to provide the greatest opportunity to meet the Governor's objective: get employees out of the building in the most expeditious manner.

Investigation into what, if anything, is to blame for the high rates of sarcoidosis amongst the building's occupants continues. As you know, Turner Building Science and Design has been engaged to perform diagnostic work on the building itself. All of those results will be shared with the Bennington employees of the building.

Both the Agency of Agriculture and the Department of Environmental Conservation are in the process of testing the soil upon which the building sits; next month scientists from NIOSH (National Institution of Safety and Health) will be onsite to help develop an air sampling plan which hopefully will provide some guidance in developing the remediation plan. In short, there are a lot of caring, dedicated, professional individuals and organizations that are doing their utmost to try and find the root cause of this situation, and develop plans for addressing it.

In closing, I understand how frustrating this situation is for many of you. The Governor is frustrated as well, as am I. I hope that my investigation into these matters next week will provide more clarity on how best to move forward. Please do not hesitate to share your concerns with me. A variety of partners are working with the state to determine the underlying cause of this situation and take appropriate action.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and thank you for your understanding during this challenging time.